

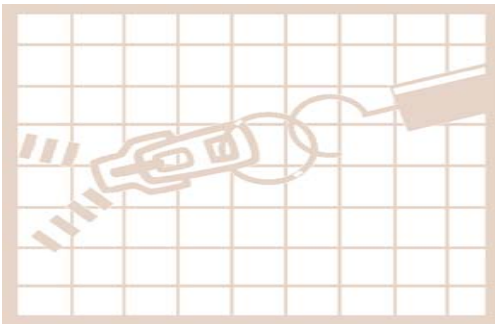
Zip

It

Up



*Clothing adaptations and
dressing aids for
independent living*



Adapted with permission by the
Virginia Department for the Aging
from material created by the
University of Iowa.

Everyone of us has fumbled with a button. But stiffness, pain, weakness, or paralysis can make dressing and undressing particularly difficult. This brochure provides information on types of clothing and simple adaptations, devices, and methods to make dressing and undressing easier.

Choose Accessible Clothing

Roomy, stretchy clothes with simple fastenings are your best bet. For ease and comfort, choose clothing with:

- Side or front closings;
- Deep armholes or raglan sleeves;
- Pull-on, elasticized waists;
- Ample ease to move freely; and
- Breathable, soft-surface fabrics.

Clothing Adaptations

Sew cuff buttons on with elastic thread; keep them buttoned all the time and simply slide your hand through.

Remove buttons from the cuff or front of a blouse or shirt, and sew the button to the closed buttonhole borders. Sew Velcro on the two sides and press to close.

Attach a ring or loop to the zipper tab so it's easier to catch with fingers or a

dressing aid. Sew loops or tabs of ribbon or seam binding inside clothes to help in pulling them on or off.

Adapt a brassiere by sewing up the back closure, cutting the front open, and attaching Velcro strips.

To keep a shirt or blouse tucked in, sew rubber strips to the inside of your skirt or slacks waistband.

Slacks can be fitted with side zippers in the legs to help make them easier to pull on and off.

Zippers in the inside seam of the knee may help trousers accommodate a cast or brace.

Buttons require the most movement and coordination; snaps or dome fasteners are easier. Zippers are faster and easier still, and simplest of all are Velcro strips.

Other Tips

Wheelchair-users should avoid long ties or scarves, full-length coats, wide pant legs, or floppy sleeves, all of which can catch in wheel spokes or pick up dirt from the tires.

Wrap-around skirts are particularly fast and easy to put on, and allow women in wheelchairs extra movement.

Choose a shawl rather than a sweater for extra warmth.

Jackets with side (not rear) vents are less likely to ride up.

Pre-tied, clip-on ties are available in attractive patterns for a dressier look.

Avoid using the pockets in your pants. Keep your wallet in a breast pocket, secured with a strip of Velcro.

If you use crutches, a top with too much roominess can bunch or bind under the arms. On the other hand, tight shirts or blouses restrict arm and shoulder movement, leading to balance problems and split seams.

A customized apron of pockets designed for tools or items that you use most frequently may make work or hobby activities easier.

Outerwear

Look for warm, waterproof designs that can bridge seasons, and that have the same design features as indoor clothing.

A hooded poncho or cape is particularly suitable for protecting a wheelchair user from rain and cold, and can be purchased at department or camping supply stores. If you design

your own, cut it just below waist level at the back and allow enough front length to drape over the knees. Taper the sides, so they won't bunch and catch in the wheels. A zip-in insulated lining can make a rain cape into a cold-weather garment.

A hat is essential in winter since so much body heat escapes from an uncovered head. Older people may be especially susceptible to chills. A well-designed winter hat covers the ears, is made of a natural fiber with good insulating properties, and is not tight. If gloves are difficult for you to wear, try mittens instead. They are warmer, easier to put on and take off, and come in a wide variety of colors and styles. A thumb-less version is especially warm and easy to put on and take off.

Footwear

Both dressy and casual shoes are available in slip-on styles.

Elastic shoelaces stay tied and simply stretch open when you put on or remove your shoes.

Shoelace clips slide up and down the lace ends and lock into place.

Many sport shoes and boots and a few dressier styles are available with Velcro tab fasteners. Try them out.

A shoe button screws into the top lace hole on your shoe; once laces are tied, you just hook them over the button to fasten.

Inexpensive removable cleats attached to shoes or boots can improve your walking control on ice or snow. These can be purchased from medical supply stores.

Dressing Aids

Dressing aids can make the process of dressing and undressing easier. A well-designed aid should be lightweight but sturdy, and will:

- Help you reach your clothing and pull it toward you;
- Hold the garment so that you can put in your foot, arm, etc.;
- Pull the article on without straining your back, shoulders or arms; and
- Attach and detach from clothing easily.

A very simple dressing aid can be made by attaching a clothes peg, hook, garter, or clamp to a piece of fabric, tape, rope, or length of wood. The rope or tape can be tied into loops for easier handling; two aids can be used together to pull on slacks, pantyhose,

or a skirt. An instant dressing aid can be improvised from a wire coat hanger by bending the triangular form into a long, thin handle; use the hook to reach, pull, or zip.

Sew small loops inside your clothes; catch them with the hook of your dressing aid to pull them toward you and to pull them on. Use belt loops on skirts or slacks, and buttonholes on shirts, blouses, and sweaters. If you own a reaching aid, you've probably already used it as a dressing aid. Most reachers have jaws or a projecting hook or lug for catching articles and retrieving them. You can find dressing aids at most medical supply stores.

Once the garment is on, you'll need to fasten it. Buttons can be dealt with easily with a button hook, available in many sizes, with a variety of handles. Push the hook through the buttonhole, catch the button in the hook, and pull it through.

Attach a ring or loop to the zipper on slacks or jackets to make it easier to catch with your finger or the hook of a dressing stick. For back zippers, use a dressing stick if you can reach the zipper. If you can't, attach a hook with a cord (before putting on the garment, if you can't reach behind), then grasp the cord or ring and pull the zipper.

Shoes and Boots

A simple shoe horn can be your best friend when it comes to putting on shoes and boots. Shop for a long-handled model to reduce bending and straining; check that the point where the horn joins the handle is sturdy, particularly if you use it for heavy shoes or boots. The handle can be built up if you find it hard or painful to grip. Push your shoe up against the wall or a solid piece of furniture for stability when putting it on.

Removing shoes and boots can also be difficult, but a bootjack can be a great help. Place your heel between the prongs of the bootjack, and pull your foot out. A bootjack can be fastened to the floor in a convenient location or left free to be moved where needed. Or use the rung of a chair or stool to catch the heel when removing shoes.

For More Information, Contact:

Virginia Assistive Technology System:
Toll-Free 1-800-435-8490

For aging-related information and services, contact:

Virginia Department for the Aging
Toll-Free 1-800-552-3402
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